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Study Says a Small Mobile Missile Would Help U.S. Deter Soviet Strike

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 7 — At a time when the Reagan Administration has proposed a ban on intercontinental mobile missiles, an Air Force analysis is circulating showing that the development of an American single-warhead mobile missile could help the United States maintain the survivability of its land-based missile force in a nuclear conflict.

The Air Force calculations are contained in a draft of a report by the Air Force's ballistic missile office. The analysis, prepared before the Administration's shift against mobile missiles, is circulating within the Pentagon and has been reviewed by some members of Congress.

The analysis, which was described by Senator Albert Gore Jr., other Congressional sources and Pentagon officials, deals with the number of Soviet weapons that would be needed for an effective barrage attack on a force of American Midgetman missiles, according to different scenarios.

Mr. Gore, who has been a leading Congressional proponent of the Midgetman program, said that the analysis supports the conclusion that the Midgetman "offers a way to escape the theoretical first-strike vulnerability" of the American land-based missile force, "which has been the central stated concern of President Reagan."

Reagan Arms Proposal

He said that if the analysis had been made available to Congress before the Reagan Administration disclosed its new arms proposal "it would have been impossible for the Administration to propose a ban on mobile missiles."

The Air Force analysis was prepared as part of more comprehensive Defense Department report to Congress on the Midgetman program, which was due last Oct. 1. Congressional proponents of the Midgetman have complained that the report was deliberately delayed.

A Defense Department official said

that civilian experts in the Office of the Secretary of Defense have not yet had a chance to examine the Air Force analysis and are uncertain whether they agree with it. The Pentagon official said that the report was one of several on which the Pentagon has fallen behind. The charges that the Pentagon had held back the report, he added, "are complete and total nonsense."

Although the Air Force has not determined the exact size of a mobile missile force, its analysis assumes that 500 single-warhead mobile Midgetman missiles would be deployed on new hardened mobile launchers that would

have the capability to withstanding a blast pressure of 30 pounds per square inch. The development of such a launcher is an objective of the Midgetman program and would be a significant technological accomplishment.

Based on Military Reservations

According to the Air Force analysis, these mobile missile launchers would patrol a 5,000-square-mile area on a small number of United States military reservations. Given warning of a Soviet attack, the Midgetman missiles would be dispersed within a 15,000-square-mile area on military land, Mr. Gore said.

A successful Soviet barrage attack on mobile Midgetman missiles within this 15,000 square-mile-area would require using almost all of the Soviet current land-based missile force, Mr. Gore said. This would leave the Soviet Union with few quick and accurate weapons to hit other targets.

A Defense Department official confirmed Senator Gore's reading of the Air Force analysis, but cautioned that the ability of Midgetman missiles to disperse quickly within a 15,000-square-mile area depended on the assumption that the Midgetman missiles would be kept continually on patrol and not in garrisons on the military reservation. If the Midgetman missiles were based in "special garrisons, they could be more vulnerable to an attack, this official said. He added that no decision

has yet been made on the missile's "concept of operation."

The Air Force analysis does not consider how reductions in the number of offensive nuclear weapons would affect the ability of the Midgetman to survive attack. But Senator Gore said that if the method of the Air Force analysis is applied to the reduced level of arms envisioned in the Soviet and American arms control proposals, the number of warheads required to attack an American land-based missile force of Midgetman missiles, 50 MX missiles and some Minuteman missiles, "would go above the number of warheads retained by the Soviet Union."

Arguments for Mobile Missile

Proponents of small one-warhead mobile missiles argue that they would help stabilize the strategic balance because they would present a less inviting target than a 10-warhead MX and would be difficult to attack. Some supporters argue that mobile missiles are a cheaper and more effective way of reducing the vulnerability of land-based missiles than proceeding with the Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative program, popularly known as "Star Wars."

Some critics have questioned the Midgetman program on technical grounds. And some Pentagon officials have privately questioned the program on cost grounds and have expressed skepticism that Congress will ultimately provide all of the funds for a program that by some estimates could cost over \$40 billion for a force of 500 missiles.

The Administration decision to seek a ban on mobile missiles marked an abrupt departure. Paul H. Nitze, a senior adviser to President Reagan and Secretary of State George P. Shultz on arms control matters, spoke about the "stabilizing" effect of the Midgetman program in an Oct. 24 speech to the American Defense Preparedness Association. Days later, the Administration decided to propose a ban on mobile missiles. In that speech, Mr. Nitze complained that a ban on new types of offensive weapons proposed by the Soviet Union would prevent the development of "more survivable ICBM's, including the new small ICBM, Midgetman."

In a related development, Gen. Brent Scowcroft told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today that the development of American and Soviet mobile missiles could lead to a more stable nuclear balance. General Scowcroft, a retired Air Force officer who chaired the 1983 Presidential Commission on Strategic Forces, said that partly as a result of the proposed ban, American nuclear policy "is a state of strategic confusion or disarray."

James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense in the Ford Administration, told the committee he believed that the Administration action was motivated partly by "tactical" concerns since the Soviet Union is ahead of the United States in the development of intercontinental mobile missiles.

He added that the Central Intelligence Agency "is exceedingly concerned about the verification problem that mobile missiles present. But Mr. Schlesinger said that "it is important in the long run for the United States to retain the option of mobility."